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BOOK DEPARTMENT

Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Edited and accented with illustrations of English Life in Chaucer's time. By JOHN SAUNDERS. New and Revised Edition. London: Macmillan & Co.

To make Chaucer as popular and as widely read as Spenser, Milton, or Dryden, is certainly an end to be devoutly wished for by every true lover of the best in English literature. More than this, it is perhaps useless to expect, and there are doubtless many who would contend, that even so much as this is an impracticable vision. Various attitudes have been held toward the question. Some seem to prefer that Chaucer shall be kept shrouded from the gaze of the common vulgar as a sort of esoteric literary treasure. Others, at all costs, would translate his antiquated English into our modern forms of speech for the sake of giving him a wider hearing. Both of these attitudes are to be deprecated as extreme. The beauty and power of Chaucer should not be evaporated, as they must largely be by any translation. On the other hand, if the way to him can be made plainer without any essential loss, we may be willing to sacrifice something of scholarly precision. Leave to the student his accurate texts, and encourage all who can to know Chaucer in this form; but let not any spirit of literary exclusiveness magnify non-essentials into inseparable obstacles to a wider reading of the great poet. Let us consider what would be the result if Shakespeare were presented only "according to the True Original Copies."

The work before us is a new, and so far as we are aware, a unique attempt at the popularization of Chaucer. The author has wisely pointed out the limitations of the older method of a translation in verse or prose. The great names of Dryden, Pope, and Wordsworth, are sufficient evidence of the futility of poetical translation; and prose can never embody the subtler and more beautiful effects of poetry. The author's ideal is that Chaucer's poetry should be "presented in its own complete form, with a modernized spelling, and an accented pronunciation," together with a reasonably full glossary at the bottom of the page. He does not attempt to realize this ideal fully, because it seems to him that, under present conditions, such

books "attract neither the student nor the general reader," being "too lax for the one—too irksome for the other." In the meantime, he effects a compromise.

The method of presentation being granted, the plan of the book is admirable. The author first considers the Prologue, and in successive sections discusses the Tabard Inn, Chivalry, Religion, Professional Men, Trade and Commerce. This gives him an opportunity to consider the various characters, each in relation to his own department of life, and also to present many interesting facts and illustrations in regard to the life and society of the age. Then the Tales are taken up. "Inconvenient or difficult passages" are translated into simple prose; but so far as possible, Chaucer's own language is presented in modernized and accented form with annotations. The whole is concluded with some brief but interesting "Remarks" upon Chaucer's labors and influence. The value of the work is greatly enhanced by the addition of the illustrations from the Ellesmere manuscript.

Such a book ought to do a real service. It certainly will do so if it shall accomplish in any degree the author's purpose of leading the reader to the point where he can appreciate the reading of Chaucer either in modified or original form. The book is to be commended to serious readers of literature, and to literary students. Not impossibly, the more scholarly worker may find something of interest and profit.

Colgate University

W. H. Crawshaw

The German Universities. Their Character and Historical Development. By FREDERICK PAULSEN. Authorized translation by EDWARD DELAVAN PERRY, with an Introduction by NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER. New York: Macmillan & Co.

The German Universities! The phrase still has a magic charm for American ears, a charm it will not soon lose. What scholar in the United States who has not been within their sacred precincts, or dreamed of going, or is now dreaming, or soon will dream, of Göttingen, or Heidelberg, Leipsic or Berlin? We may skirmish around the outer courts of the temple of pedagogy, but they only enter the holy of holies who go to Jena, and the mystery of what they see there still remains.

Professor Paulsen's work was composed as a part of Germany's contribution to our own Columbian Exposition. It was worthy of the author and of the occasion, but it is safe to say